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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY



CALIFORNIA
ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

JUN 16 2008

GGA Data Reveals Impact of Oil Spill

Golden Gate Audubon has continued its work in response to November's devastating *Cosco Busan* oil spill in order to document the impacts on birds and identify ways to avoid such disasters in the future. In the weeks following the spill, our volunteers gave over 600 hours to monitor oiled birds. More than 70 species were observed oiled by the spill.

This spring, we completed a preliminary analysis of the data collected by the over 200 volunteers who monitored the shoreline in November and December. Our data was limited to the places that volunteers were able to access, but was revealing about the extent of the damage. The data indicates that more than three-fourths of oiled bird reports were from the East Bay, which shows the effects of tidal action on the oil spill. Over one-third of birds reported subsequently died, while less than one-sixth were treated and released. Many—both dead and alive—were never collected by rescue teams. Although our volunteers reported only about 100 birds found dead during the period, they observed over 2,000 oiled birds in San Francisco, Alameda, and Contra Costa counties.

Some of the species affected, including Brown Pelicans, Western Snowy Plovers, and Clark's Grebes, are (or were at the time of the oil spill) listed under the federal Endangered Species Act or appeared on National Audubon's

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Western Snowy Plover.

GGA Volunteers Protect Threatened Snowy Plovers

July brings Western Snowy Plovers back to the beaches of San Francisco after their brief absence during the breeding season. For most of the year, Western Snowy Plovers (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) are found at Ocean Beach and Crissy Field. Both beaches are part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) managed by the National Park Service. The Pacific Coast population of Snowy Plovers was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1993 because of dwindling populations.

This western population extends as far north as southern Washington. Breeding populations are found in southern Baja California in Mexico, and wintering populations reach south to Central America. Snowy Plovers have lost significant areas of breeding habitat and are frequently disturbed by human activities. Currently, only about 3,000 breeding pairs remain along the Pacific Coast, including about 500 pairs in the San Francisco Bay Area. During the past five years, each pair has fledged, on average, one chick per year, but for the past 10 years, the overall population has remained about 3,000 pairs.

Nesting Snowy Plovers require open areas above the high tide line on beaches, salt pans, and salt ponds. Wintering plovers rest and forage in similar habitats, which

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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 25, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Membership is \$25 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. The board of directors meets the last Monday of every month (except August and December) at 7:30 p.m. in the chapter office.

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Nature Store hours: Monday–Friday, 9–12, 1–5

Design and layout: e.g. communications

Dean Witter Foundation Helps GGA

Each time you receive a membership reminder or fundraising appeal from Golden Gate Audubon, you may notice the asterisk on the back of the reply card highlighting our partnership with the Dean Witter Foundation. For the past three years, the foundation has provided generous matching funds for each donation or membership payment.

Our financial collaboration with the Dean Witter Foundation began in 2004, when we received a grant for our Eco-Oakland Program. For the past three years, the foundation has supported our volunteer and membership development programs on a matching basis, helping us increase our capacity to engage in habitat restoration and conservation advocacy projects throughout the Central Bay. Since 2005 we've added more than 400 new people to our cadre of grassroots volunteers and have enrolled more than 2,600 new Supporting Members—nearly two-thirds of our current Supporting Membership. This growth has enabled us to do more on behalf of Bay Area birds and wildlife and has made us one of the West Coast's most effective conservation organizations. But our growth would have been impossible without greater organizational and staff resources—resources facilitated, in large part, by the Dean Witter Foundation.

The Dean Witter Foundation, named in honor of its founder, was launched in the booming 1950s to support efforts dearest to Mr. Witter and his family. Today, the foundation practices imaginative grant making for economic and conservation projects. It supports graduate business schools and other organizations dedicated to higher education in finance. It gives additional grants to support wildlife research, conservation projects, and opportunities that expand environmental education in Northern California—the very core of our work.

Mr. Witter was born in Wisconsin in 1887 and moved with his family to California shortly thereafter. He graduated from UC Berkeley in 1909 and launched Dean Witter & Company with four family members 15 years later. The company expanded throughout Mr. Witter's lifetime, growing to become the largest investment house on the West Coast by his death in 1969. The foundation bearing his name grew as well, and today it provides nearly \$1 million in support of nonprofit organizations and educational institutions.

We are honored to have received such extensive support from the Dean Witter Foundation. We thank the foundation, its benefactors, and the Witter family for their critical role in building Golden Gate Audubon into an ever more effective conservation organization.

—Elizabeth Murdock and Michael Martin

Golden Gate Audubon Thanks Michael Martin

Beginning in May 2008, Development Manager Michael Martin took a new position as foundation relations manager at Pacific Environment, an international conservation organization working around the Pacific Rim.

Michael joined Golden Gate Audubon's staff in July 2006 as our volunteer and membership development coordinator. In this role, Michael helped us build a program to recruit, train, and retain volunteers. His efforts significantly increased the number of volunteer opportunities offered each year and, in turn, the number of volunteers actively engaged with our programs. He also helped us increase membership revenue to support our programs. In addition, Michael played a central role in coordinating our 90th anniversary celebration in October 2007. For the past seven months, Michael has served as development manager, where he has focused on grant writing and membership development.

We are very sorry to lose Michael, who has been a critical member of the Golden Gate Audubon team. We wish him all the best in his new ventures.

—Elizabeth Murdock



GGA CONTINUES TO OPPOSE PORT OF OAKLAND PROJECT

At this writing, Golden Gate Audubon is still engaged in a lawsuit with the Port of Oakland and Swan Terminal, LLC, over the failure to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) under the California Environmental Quality Act for a Roadway Express trucking terminal that will be built near the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline. We are working diligently to find mitigation that can reduce the impact of light and noise on wildlife but remain concerned about the long-term impact of this and other proposed projects on birds that rely upon the restored wetlands and seasonal ponds, including the endangered California Clapper Rail.

Despite the Port of Oakland's increasing efforts to green its image, the port is now preparing an EIR for a second trucking terminal adjacent to the Roadway Express terminal and the sensitive wildlife habitat. This terminal will allow a San Lorenzo facility to relocate to East Oakland, bringing more pollution to Oakland's already toxic air. Golden Gate Audubon is deeply concerned about the cumulative impacts of noise and light on wildlife, as well as the increased air pollution, and is now preparing comments on the EIR.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

We urgently need your help. Please spread the word and voice your opposition to the second trucking terminal. Contact the mayor and the port and detail what birds, especially rare and endangered ones, you have seen at MLK shoreline, and share your concerns about the environmental injustice of bringing more air pollution to East Oakland. You should send or call in comments to the following:

Board of Port Commissioners, Port of Oakland, 530 Water Street, Oakland, CA 94607; 510.627.1100; board@portoakland.com; dheinze@portoakland.com.

Mayor Ron Dellums, 1 Frank Ogawa Plaza, Third Floor, Oakland, CA 94612; 510.238.3141; fax 510.238.4731; office ofthemayor@oaklandnet.com.



California Clapper Rail, an endangered species now threatened by Port of Oakland development

Tell R&L Carriers that the company should not bring more air pollution to Oakland or harm wildlife in a sensitive habitat. Call R&L Carriers at 877.447.4875 or fax 510.481.2987. You can also contact the Oakland City Council (www.oaklandnet.com/government/council/city-officials.html) to express your opposition.

Finally, please send a copy of your comments to Eli Saddler at esaddler@goldengateaudubon.org or via postal mail.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AND EVENTS

Sunday, June 1, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., and Sunday, August 3, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

As part of our ongoing efforts to restore wetlands along San Francisco's southern waterfront, we will continue our Pier 94 workdays and monitoring this summer. The June date is devoted to weeding the beach and uplands; the August date is a combination workday and monitoring of California Sea-blite.

Saturday, August 2, 1 – 4 p.m.

Help improve habitat for birds and other wildlife on the coastal dunes and bluffs at

Lands End in San Francisco. Wear comfortable clothing and sturdy shoes; we will provide tools, water, and snacks. Take Clement Street to 34th Avenue, turn right on 34th to enter Lincoln Park Golf Course and continue up to the Legion at Honor. The group will meet at the top of the hill where 34th intersects El Camino del Mar at the access road to the golf course. Event is led by Parks Conservancy and cosponsored by Golden Gate Audubon.

Sunday, August 17, 10 a.m. – noon

Join us for Creek Care workday at Wildcat Creek Viewpoint in the East Bay. The East Bay Regional Park District and Golden Gate Audubon are working in partnership to clean up this hidden wildlife habitat where Wildcat Creek joins San Francisco Bay. Meet at the parking lot off Richmond Parkway between Gertrude Avenue and Pittsburg Avenue. Look for the East Bay Regional Park District signs.

For more information or detailed directions, contact Jennifer Robinson, volunteer coordinator, at 510.919.5873 or jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org.

OUR MANY THANK-YOUS

Golden Gate Audubon appreciates the special agencies and people who support our restoration plans and programs throughout the year. For our work at Harding Park, we thank the San Francisco Natural Areas Programs and San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department. This semester, three students from the University of San Francisco joined the Harding Park project and worked on a plant guide and restoration map for the site. Allison Euten, Ritz Marie Yu, and Tessia Wade were fantastic stewards of Harding Park.

For our work at Pier 94, we thank the Port of San Francisco, Literacy for Environmental Justice, Hansen Aggregates, and NorCal Waste Systems Inc. And for our work at the Presidio, we thank the Presidio Trust and Parks Conservancy.

We could not carry out all these projects without your generous support.

CONSERVATION CORNER continued on page 4

SOUTHERN WATERFRONT UPDATE

Golden Gate Audubon remains dedicated to supporting improvements along San Francisco's Southern Waterfront—important bird habitat and an area undergoing rapid changes.

At Pier 94, we have successfully established plantings of endangered California Sea-blite (*Suaeda californica*) at our resto-



James McMullen returned for his second workday at Pier 94, joining other volunteers to recognize Earth Day by cleaning up the restored wetland.

ration site, where volunteers continue to monitor and help restore the tidal wetland. On Saturday, April 19, new and returning volunteers celebrated Earth Day at Pier 94. They worked on building a "rock bridge" to slow the water flow from the north basin to

the south and cleared weeds away from the beach, the location of the Sea-blite colonies. After gathering many wheelbarrow loads of weeds and bags of trash, everyone broke for a lunch, courtesy of Goat Hill Pizza. The day ended with Eddie Bartley, Golden Gate Audubon instructor and field trip leader, treating everyone to a walk to see the birds at Pier 94 as he described the natural history of San Francisco Bay. Among the birds using the restored wetland were American Avocets in full breeding plumage, Semipalmated Plovers, and yellowlegs.

We thank Literacy for Environmental Justice for supplying tools, the Port of San Francisco for providing restroom facilities, and Hansen Aggregates for continuing to water our plantings from the fall.

Elsewhere on the Southern Waterfront, Golden Gate Audubon has joined the Save Candlestick Point Coalition and is working to keep Candlestick Point State Recreation Area open, despite the threat of 48 state park closures. On April 7, Golden Gate Audubon joined Literacy for Environmental Justice, Nature in the City, the Neighborhood Parks Council, and others at the Capitol in Sacramento to advocate for parks. Meanwhile, we have been collecting signatures for the coalition and will track developments.

Golden Gate Audubon is also opposing construction of a bridge over Yosemite Slough. This project, currently included in Proposition G, will degrade habitat along the Bayview shoreline. We are working with other environmental groups to alter this proposal and to address other environ-

mental concerns associated with Prop G prior to the June elections

Stay involved by joining one of our many ongoing activities; contact Volunteer Coordinator Jennifer Robinson, jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org.

SUMMER MONITORING PROJECTS

Golden Gate Audubon's San Francisco Conservation Committee is leading three monitoring projects in the city this summer: San Francisco Southern Waterfront Survey, Heron and Egret Project at Lake Merced, and Bank Swallow Survey at Ocean Beach. For detailed descriptions of each project, see the May 2008 *Gull* or go to www.goldengateaudubon.org. You can also contact Jennifer Robinson, volunteer coordinator, at 510.919.5873 or jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org.

VOLUNTEERS—MARK YOUR CALENDARS

To toast and celebrate our amazing volunteers, Golden Gate Audubon will hold a thank-you party on Saturday, September 13, noon to 3 p.m., at Crissy Field in San Francisco. We will have an outdoor picnic and barbecue by the Warming Hut, and we will take advantage of this great opportunity to view the Western Snowy Plovers.

Join us for some good food and enjoyable bird walks, followed by a ceremony when Golden Gate Audubon will present two awards. Please check our website in mid-June for more information. For more about Crissy Field, go to www.parksconservancy.org/our_work/crissy/resources.asp.

OIL SPILL from page 1

WatchList. The populations of many other species are declining in the Bay Area.

On April 22, Noreen Weeden, chair of Golden Gate Audubon's San Francisco Conservation Committee and coordinator of our San Francisco oil spill response team, joined representatives of two prominent bird rescue groups to present our preliminary data at our Speaker Series event. The Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN) reported that 1,084 birds were collected alive and 1,851 were collected dead throughout the bay. Grebes, scaups, and cormorants were the majority of dead birds found by Golden Gate Audubon, but gulls and scoters were also among the highest fatalities at OWCN. Ultimately, 418 birds were released alive. Scientists estimate that actual fatalities may have been up to 10 times greater than the num-

ber of oiled birds reported.

Moving forward, we are working to improve regulations that will help avoid future oil spills and lead to better response if a spill does occur. On April 7, Bay Area legislators introduced a package of bills calling for more widespread use of volunteers so that more birds can be rescued, rather than simply counted and reported to overburdened agencies. Senator Barbara Boxer will likely introduce a federal bill to support future volunteer efforts. We are also working to build Golden Gate Audubon's capacity to respond to future threats through trainings and enhanced web and email communications.

None of this work would have been possible without our dedicated volunteers, and we thank all of you who helped during or after the oil spill.



CLASSES

Summer East Bay Classes

Golden Gate Audubon is sponsoring two summer classes through the Albany Adult School, 601 San Gabriel Avenue, Albany. Register online at <http://albany.k12.ca.us/adult/> or call 510.559.6580 for more information.

Summer Birding

Christine Wright

Tuesday, June 24, 7 – 9 p.m., plus six Wednesday evening field trips, June 25 – July 23, 6 – 9 p.m.

Summer is not the time to put away your binoculars. Evening walks can be filled with interesting bird sightings, sounds, and behaviors. These field trips will focus on birds as they continue breeding or tend to their recently fledged young, while also contending with the intense heat or cooling fog in the summer months here in the San Francisco Bay Area. We will also be on the lookout for birds already migrating south. For more information, visit www.blkittiwake.com.

Birds and Butterflies: Easy Garden Enchantment with Native Plants

Corinne Louise Design

Tuesdays, July 15 – August 5, 7 – 9 p.m., plus one field trip to be announced

Find out how to welcome birds, butterflies, and other beneficial critters—and become captivated by the beauty of native plants as you learn year-round ecological gardening. Gorgeous slide shows, invaluable environmental and natural history information, and easy garden management lessons will help you create an enchanting wildlife habitat. Materials fee is \$5, payable to instructor. For more information, email corinnelouisedesign@yahoo.com or go to www.thegardenisateacher.com.

New San Francisco Class

Wild Birds of San Francisco — An Introduction

Joe Morlan, with Golden Gate Audubon

Tuesdays, July 15 – August 12, 7 – 9 p.m., with field trips on the Sunday following each class

Join an enthusiastic group to learn about the birds that reside in or migrate through San Francisco, and discover the habitats where they can be found. Eddie will share his own exceptional photographs along with identification techniques and information on avian physiology, optics, and field guides. Participants will see resident and summer breeding birds raising new families and observe birds returning from their northerly breeding grounds. The class will be held at the Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way (free parking in the museum lot). Class fee is \$70. To sign up, contact Kristen Bunting, Golden Gate Audubon office manager, at 510.843.2222.

Shorebirds—Fall Class at the Oakland Museum

Bob

Tuesdays, September 9 – 23, 7 – 8:30 p.m., with field trips on the Saturday following each class, 9 – 11:30 a.m.

In autumn, shorebirds are migrating from their northern breeding grounds to their southern wintering areas—and many are stopping to rest and feed in San Francisco Bay. Bob, long-time Golden Gate Audubon birding instructor and field trip leader, will discuss the species of shorebirds worldwide and their annual life cycle while focusing on migration and breeding behavior. Special emphasis will be on shorebirds seen in the Bay Area. The class will be richly illustrated with digital slides of shorebirds of the world.

The class will be held at the Oakland Museum of California, 1000 Oak Street. The museum is conveniently located near the Lake Merritt BART station, and free parking is available in the museum garage. The class limited to 25 participants, and the fee is \$70. To sign up, contact Kristen Bunting, Golden Gate Audubon office manager, at 510.843.2222.

Joe Morlan's Fall Classes in San Francisco

Evening classes taught by Joe Morlan and endorsed by Golden Gate Audubon start in early September and meet from 7 to 9:15 p.m. at the Marina Middle School, 3500 Fillmore at Bay Street (free parking provided). Optional field trips may be arranged for weekends.

Field Ornithology I combines basic field skills with the study of bird ecology, biology, evolution, and behavior. Part A (EA101): Tuesday, September 9 – October 21; Part B (EA105): Tuesday, October 28 – December 16.

Field Ornithology II is a continuing study of North American birds including terns, jaegers, alcids, pigeons, and parrots. Part A (EA110): Wednesday, September 10 – October 22; Part B (EA115): Wednesday, October 29 – December 17.

Field Ornithology III covers land birds including juncos, longspurs, grosbeaks, buntings, blackbirds, and orioles. Part A (EA120): Thursday, September 11 – October 23; Part B (EA125): Thursday, October 30 – December 18.

Fees are \$140 for each seven-week course (\$125 for six-week EA120), with a \$10 discount if you register at least a week early. For further information: 415.561.1860. To enroll online: www.evolveww.com/ce.ccsf. Joe Morlan's website: <http://fog.ccsf.edu/~jmorlan>.



FIELD TRIPS

PAM BELCHAMBER, COORDINATOR

\$ Entrance fee

 Biking trip

For questions about individual field trips, contact the leaders. If you cannot reach a leader, contact Pam Belchamber at 510.549.2839. Field trips are also listed on the Golden Gate Audubon website at www.goldengateaudubon.org.

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Sundays, June 1, July 6, August 3,
8 – 10:30 a.m.

Alan Ridley, allanrid@pacbell.net;
Helen McKenna, 415.566.3241;
Ginny Marshall, 650.349.3780

Meet at front gate of garden in Golden Gate Park, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. This delightful section of park has several micro-habitats that attract an array of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds. This monthly trip is oriented toward helping beginning birders develop their skills in spotting and identifying birds.

Tilden Regional Park

Blackberry

Friday, June 6, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Phila Rogers, 510.848.9156,
philajane6@yahoo.com

Meet at parking lot at north end of Central Park Dr. for a 1-mile stroll through this lush riparian area. Mark your calendar for this first Friday of June, and then again for the first Friday in September, when these popular Jewel Lake rambles resume.

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Saturdays, June 7, July 5, August 2,
10 a.m. – noon

Angie Geiger and Nancy DeStefanis,
SF Nature Education; Darin Dawson, SF
Botanical Garden docent, 415.387.9160,
www.sfnature.org

Meet at front gate of garden in Golden Gate Park, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. Families welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Cosponsored by Botanical Garden, SF Nature Education, and Golden Gate Audubon.

Corona Heights

San Francisco

Fridays, June 20, July 18, August 15,
8 – 10 a.m.

Charles Hibbard; Lewis Ellingham; Brian Fitch; Margaret Goodale, mgoodale@randallmuseum.org, 415.554.9600 x16

Meet in front of Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, at end of Museum Way off Roosevelt. We will enjoy views of the city and bay as we circle Corona Heights, checking the east canyon woodland and north forest for residents and migrants, as well as monitoring the hilltop scrub and south cliff.

Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

Oakland

Wednesdays, June 25, July 23, August
27, 9:30 a.m. – noon

Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066,
hilary@powersedit.com; Ruth Tobey,
510.528.2093, ruthtobey@earthlink.net

Meet at large spherical cage near Nature Center at Perkins and Bellevue. We will bird around there, then go up garden path toward Children's Fairyland or walk down lake toward Embarcadero, after which we will cover what we missed. In summer, the lake has fewer species, but as in previous years we hope to find successful nesting birds, including Black Phoebe, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Double-crested Cormorant, Cooper's Hawk, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Snowy Egret, and Great Egret. We will watch the Canada Geese go through their molt and keep a sharp eye out for Caspian Terns and Ross's Geese.

Take 12, N, or NL bus to Grand and Perkins, and walk into park on Perkins. Best parking is at boathouse lot near spherical cage. Entry (via Bellevue near Children's Fairyland) is free on weekdays.

Lassen Volcanic National Park

Friday – Sunday, June 27 – 29

Dan and Joan Murphy, 415.564.0074,
murphsf@comcast.net (email preferred)

Join Dan and Joan for their annual family camping excursion and a chance to

see Black Swift, Bald Eagle, Osprey, Townsend's Solitaire, Mountain Bluebird, Calliope Hummingbird, Black-backed Woodpecker, Williamson's Sapsucker, and many of the flycatchers, warblers, and finches that breed in the mountains.

On Friday, meet at Manzanita Lake Campground store at 6:30 a.m. to bird around the lake for 2–3 hours. At 10:30 we'll rendezvous at the store and take a leisurely hike of 3–5 miles on one of Lassen's beautiful trails.

On Saturday, we'll meet at the store at 7:30 a.m. and caravan north to Burney Falls, Fall River Valley, and Baum Lake. This all-day excursion of about 100 miles will include a midday break of 2–3 hours



Charles Denson

Male Cooper's Hawk gathering nesting material.

at Lake Britton. On Sunday, we'll bird through the park and conclude after lunch at Summit Lake Campground.

Thursday night preview: Join us at 7 p.m. for an hour or so to watch wildlife at Hat Lake. From Manzanita Lake, drive south into park for about 12 miles. Park in the lot to the left just beyond the hairpin turn at Hat Lake.

Stop at our campsite for further information. We will have a campfire every evening beginning between 8 and 9 p.m. Bring your own chair and a cup. We will provide hot water for tea or coffee. Check

campground bulletin boards or Hat Creek Resort office for our poster, campsite number, and any last minute schedule changes.

For a detailed itinerary of this trip, go to the field trips listing at www.goldengateaudubon.org

From Bay Area, drive north on I-5 to its junction with Hwy 44 in Redding. Go east on Hwy 44 to northwest entrance to Lassen. Camping facilities are available at Manzanita Lake Campground: loops A and C by reservation only, loops B and D on a first come, first served basis. Reservations: www.recreation.gov or 877.444.6777. Lodging is available about 15 miles north of park at Hat Creek Resort, Old Station, 530.335.7121. Other information can be obtained from park headquarters, Mineral, CA 96063. Carpooling available.

Mono Lake

Emilie Strauss/Hopkins

Friday – Sunday, July 11 – 13

Rusty Scalf, rscaif@sonic.net,

510.666.9936; Emilie Strauss,

desertpeach@earthlink.net, 510.540.8749

Meet July 11 at 8 a.m. at Mono Lake County Park, just north of Lee Vining; overnight stay on July 10 is recommended. We plan to cover diverse habitats, hiking up to 10,000 feet in the surrounding Eastern Sierra in search of birds and flowers. Trip will likely include Mono Lake and Lundy Canyon and environs, but will be fine-tuned upon arrival. Emilie has done extensive field work in the Mono basin. Participants are responsible for their own transportation, food, and lodging; information can be found at www.leevining.com. Trip will include long hikes at a high elevation and will require endurance. Trip is limited to 15 people. Contact Rusty Scalf to reserve your spot and for more information. Be prepared for entrance fees to such places as Yosemite National Park and Bodie State Park, and/or taxi service across Saddlebag Lake. \$

Farallon Islands Pelagic Trip

Sunday, August 10

Alan Hopkins, ash@sfo.com,

415.664.0983

We will depart from Sausalito at 7:30 a.m. aboard the *Salty Lady* for an 8-hour adventure to the Farallones and beyond, the most reliable location for viewing

FIELD TRIPS continued on page 8



Bicycle Trips

Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233, Kathy_Jarrett@yahoo.com

Transit information: www.transit511.org

Quarry Lakes, Alameda Creek, Coyote Hills

Alameda County

Saturday, June 21

Meet at 8:20 a.m. on east side of Fremont BART Station in parking lot. We begin birding from the time we step off BART train, and they vary with the riparian, marsh, and bayside habitats. Total distance is about 24 miles mostly on paved bike trails, with almost no uphill. Trip ends at BART about 3 p.m. Picnic lunch will be at Coyote Hills Visitor Center. Bring bicycle lock, lunch, and liquids. Bicycle helmet required. Rain cancels. Reservations not necessary, but an email or phone call is appreciated.

BART: Fremont train passes through MacArthur at 7:34 a.m. Allow time to process your ticket and get your bike to platform. **Car:** Take I-880 to Fremont and exit on Mowry Ave. Go east on Mowry toward central Fremont for 2.3 miles. BART lot is on east side of station past Civic Center Dr.

Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge

Santa Clara County

Saturday, July 12

Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233,

kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Santa Clara/Great America Capital Corridor Train Station or at 9:15 a.m. at Alviso Marina trailhead. Ride from station to Alviso County Park follows a trail where birds are usually seen. From Alviso we will ride on streets to NWR visitor center, make a circuit of the unpaved trail around the marsh, and return to Alviso County Park. Decaying town of Drawbridge can be seen from trail. Approximate distance is 15 miles. Trip ends around noon. Bring bicycle lock, lunch, and liquids. Bicycle helmet required. Rain cancels. Reservations not necessary, but an email or phone call is appreciated.

Transit: Capitol Corridor Train #723 leaves Richmond (BART connection) at 7:05 a.m., Berkeley at 7:12, Emeryville at 7:20, Jack London at 7:33, and Coliseum at 7:42 (BART connection). We will return on Train #734 from Santa Clara at 1:02 p.m. (next train, #736, is at 2:52). Emeryville and Jack London stations are full service. Arrive at station well in advance to purchase ticket and get on platform, senior fares at a 15 percent discount are available for those 62 and over. Other stations have ticket machines, or buy tickets on train. **Car:** Take I-880 south toward San Jose, then Hwy 237 west. Go 2.2 miles, take North 1st St. exit, and turn right. In about 1 mile, North 1st becomes Taylor St. In one block, turn right on Gold St, left on Elizabeth St, and right on Hope St. Continue to Alviso County Park and trailhead parking for refuge.

East Shore State Park

Alameda and Contra Costa Counties

Saturday, July 26, 2008

Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233,

kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

Meet at 8:10 a.m. at El Cerrito Del Norte BART Station or 8:30 at end of South 51st St. in Richmond. There is a spur from the SF Bay Trail to this point. We will bird along SF Bay Trail from Richmond to Emeryville and end at Aquatic Park in Berkeley. Lunch may be purchased at Seabreeze Market on University Ave. in Berkeley. Bring bicycle lock, lunch, and liquids. Bicycle helmet required. Rain cancels. Reservations not necessary, but an email or phone call is appreciated.

Take Bayview exit from I-580 north and turn left to cross west over freeway. Go left on Seaport and immediately left on South 51st St. Continue to end and park on street. Entrance to short spur to Bay Trail starts here. If you are concerned about security, park at Point Isabel and ride north on trail about .75 mile to meet group.

Tufted Puffins and other alcids. After visiting the islands, weather permitting, we will continue west to Continental Shelf to look for deep-water species like Black-footed Albatross and Blue Whale.

Cost of the trip is \$112 for Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Members, \$137 for nonmembers—and last year's trip sold out early! To reserve your space, send a check to Shearwater Journeys, PO Box 190, Hollister CA 95024 (no refunds). Include date of trip and phone number and email (if available) for each member of your party, noting who is a GGA member—along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. A small fuel surcharge may be required on day of trip. Details will be mailed to you upon payment. For more information, contact Alan Hopkins.

Snag Lake Backpack Trip

Friday – Monday, August 22 – 25

Robin Pulich; David Rice, 510.527.7210, drice2@comcast.net

We will backpack 3 miles to Snag Lake and spend 3 nights in primitive camping by a stream near a large meadow. We

should see flocks of mixed warblers and other songbirds, plus resident birds, Bald Eagles, and migrating shorebirds. We will be above 6,000 feet. To avoid impact on fragile habitat, trip is limited to 12 people. Each participant is responsible for his/her own gear and food; some shared meals can be arranged. Contact leader to reserve a space.

Bolsa Chica—Canceled

Rusty Scalf, rscalf@sonic.net

Having scouted this area of Orange County, Rusty felt the condition of fire-ravaged Trubuco and Majeska canyons was disappointing. Despite the birdlife along the riparian corridors, it's going to take several years for the hills to recover. Contact Rusty Scalf for more information.

Voice Your Choice in Support of Golden Gate Audubon

The Patagonia store in San Francisco has chosen Gate Audubon to participate in its Voice Your Choice program, which allows Patagonia shoppers to select their favorite environmental nonprofit as a beneficiary of the company's philanthropy. Voting takes place at the store, 770 North Point Street, in the North Beach/Fisherman's Wharf area. The organization selected will receive a contribution in the amount of 1 percent of all sales from Patagonia's San Francisco store.

Patagonia, which sells an extensive array of outdoor wear, is a founding member of 1% for the Planet, a corporate philanthropy program that donates 1 percent of all sales to conservation efforts. Over the past 20 years, Patagonia has given more than \$30 million in cash and in-kind services to grassroots and international environmental nonprofit organizations.

Golden Gate Audubon is honored to be a potential participant in this program—and hopes to be Patagonia customers' nonprofit of choice. Help us get the word out, and remember to vote for Golden Gate Audubon the next time you shop Patagonia.

Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education, and member activities!

Whole Foods Market

Anonymous, Ruth & Alan Tobey

Anonymous (Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge), Lesley Benn, Virginia L. Carder, James Herre, Angus M. Parker, Anna M. Payne, Helene & George Strauss

Anonymous, Dr Thomas Edward Ainsworth, Applera Corporation, Laura Baker & Lewis Lubin, Pam Belchamber, Barbara B. Benner, Dr James M. Betts, Vern S. Bothwell & Kirsten Stacey, Prof. Judith P. Breen, June & H.J. Browne, Sheana & Lewis Butler, Mary E. Cantrell, Lanice & David Clark, Nancy Tisdale Clark, Courtney Clarkson & Roy Leggitt III, Susan Mary & Kevin Consey, Natalie K. Ernststrom, Margaret C. Fleming, the Fremont Group Foundation, Janet Gore, Harris Bank Foundation, Lyn Hejninian, Katherine & Blair Jarrett, Ann F. & John A. Kadyk, Joan Poteet & Timothy S. Kask, Eileen & Gordon Libby, Kevin Liberg, Germaine Long, Mary R. &

Charles Lowrey, Mignonet Montez, Mark A. Mushkat, Carol Pacht, George S. Peyton, Jr. & Lani Rumbaoa, Pacific Gas and Electric Corporation Foundation, Piedmont Garden Club, Bill Pinkham & Wanda Mar, R. & Carla Rugeroni, Leslie Smith & James Pfeiffer, Virginia Stearns, John Sudall & Josephine Burns-Sudall, Elizabeth H. & John Sutro, Constance & Kevin Sutton, Richard Taylor & Tracy Grubbs, Annette Waite, Elise G. White, Lawrence J. Yabroff

Myrtle & Henry Adams, Stephanie & George B. Almeida, Patricia Bacchetti, Mildred & Edward Bennett, Wilma Jane & Arthur Bergen, Nellie W. Bertucci, Ellen & Russell Breslauer, Sandra & Robert Chilvers, Louise & C. Robert Clements, the Clorox Company Foundation, J. Cnoy, Hugh Cotter, Susan & Don Couch, M.A. Cronin, Lawrence Danos, John R. Domzalski, Thomas L. Eckstrom, Lewis J. Feldman, Maria L. & Matthew Fuller, Jacqueline Gilbert, Elan Hahn, David W. Hamilton & Nancy Huneke, Carol L. Hanson, Lola Harris, Keelung Hong, Jason Hubbard & Kellie Geldreich, Bruncelia & James Hanson, Patti & Glen Itano, Elisabeth A. Jacobsohn & Earl Jerry

Bowling, Barbara Brooten-Job, Dr. & Mr. Caroline & Timothy Johnson, Barbara D. Kibbe, Naomi Kikuchi, Michele Liapes, Hilary & Donald Lim, Carl Margolis, Francis E. McKinnon, Margaret Mori Fasla, Zoanne Nordstrom, Dr. John W. Pierce, Lyn Reese, Holliday Reynolds, Daniel J. Richman, Virginia & Kenneth Salter, Virginia & William Schultz, Irena R. & Stephen F. Schwaderer, Josiane Siegfried, Judith K. & Arthur J. Slater, Sylvia Spears, John Stephen Spellman, Richard O. Sproul, Carol A. Sughrue, Jean C. Thomas, Rachel Watson-Clark, Wells Fargo Community Support Campaign, Mary Ann & Chuck Wenger, Janet Wessel, William Whitson, Carroll Williams, Jr., Theodore Wilmoth, Alison J. Wood

Susan E. Palo & Eric Schroeder: Robert Wetle

Dr. & Mrs. James & Marilyn Murdock: Elizabeth Murdock

Goat Hill Pizza: Pizza for Earth Day



A few winter holdovers remained in the region, but April birding was mostly about warming weather, returning summer nesters, and wandering migrants.

LOONS TO DUCKS

The long wings of a Black-footed Albatross were discerned from Pigeon Pt., SM, on Apr. 15 (RT). Pigeon Pt. seawatches also yielded Many Shearwaters on the 2nd and 27th (PM, RT) and a Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel on the 2nd (PM). Cattle Egrets wandered to Redwood Shores, SM, Apr. 22-27 (PM, mob) and to Palo Alto Baylands, SCL, on the 27th (VF). A wintering Harlequin Duck stopped at Richmond Harbor, CC, on the 18th (JA). Long-tailed Ducks were reported as late as Apr. 29 at Bodega Bay, SON (DF).

RAPTORS TO ALCIDS

On Apr. 2, a Common Black-Hawk (*Buteo gallus anthracinus*) was photographed over Ring Mountain, MRN (KH, DR, BS, LB). The sighting prompted a visit to Laguna Santa Rosa, SON, where a female Black-Hawk has maintained residence off and on for 4-plus years. Her return was confirmed on Apr. 14 (SM).

On the 27th, a Black Rail was heard calling in the marshes near China Camp SP, MRN (KW, MSu, KV). In SCL, Solitary Sandpipers flew over the ponds at Sunnyvale Baylands Park on the 27th (MRo) and stopped along San Tomas Aquino Cr. on the 30th (CWF). A Rock Sandpiper flew north over Pigeon Pt. on Apr. 27 (RT). On the 7th, a Silt Sandpiper was identified at Coyote Pt., SM (LG, JF). Migrating Red-necked Phalaropes reached a high count of 70-plus on Apr. 29 at Las Gallinas sewage ponds, MRN (MSt, LB).

Pigeon Pt. seawatches yielded a Black-legged Kittiwake on Apr. 2, a Pomarine Jaeger on the 10th, and a Franklin's Gull on the 16th (RT). First and 2nd cycle Glaucous Gulls were reported Apr. 6 at Salt Pond A16 in Alviso, SCL (BP; oob). Elsewhere, a Glaucous Gull soared over McLaren Park, SF, on the 17th (AH) and lingered at the PRNS Fish Docks (MRN) on the 18th (AR).



Dusky Flycatcher at Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo State Park

DOVES TO THRASHERS

An evening hike in Tilden RP, CC, kicked up a Common Poorwill on Apr. 23 (BB). Black-chinned Hummingbirds returned to inland sites by mid-month and were noted over Telegraph Hill, SF, Apr. 13-17 (AH). A Costa's Hummingbird ended up in Tennessee Valley, MRN, on the 3rd (LS). A Calliope Hummingbird was discovered on Apr. 6 at Coyote Pt. Museum, SM (RT). Multiple Calliopes were reported from eastern ALA and CC as they headed north to the mountains.

A lone Lewis's Woodpecker was spotted on Apr. 12 at Crane Cr. RP, SON (TC, fide HK). A Red-naped Sapsucker turned up on the 5th at Stevens Cr. CP, SCL, where it entertained admirers through the 12th (PD).

mob) Migrating Dusky Flycatchers were located Apr. 13 and 22 in Mitchell Cyn. Mt. Diablo SP, CC (HH, GH, HH). A late Tropical Kingbird on the 28th was attracted by a hummingbird over Mt. Diablo (AH, RG). Cassin's Kingbirds were reported Apr. 12 at Coyote Pt., SM (RT) and Apr. 27 in San Martin, SCL (LA).

On the 28th, careful scrutiny revealed a Plumbeous Vireo in Buena Vista Park, SF (BG). Bank Swallows returned to their traditional nesting site at Ft. Funston, SF, and were reported over Nicasio, MRN, on the 15th (JC, AK) and over Hayward RS, ALA, on the 24th (BR).

WOOD WARBLERS TO FINCHES

A couple Palm Warblers still lingered in the region at Abbott's Lagoon, PRNS, MRN, on the 1st (LB; oob) and at Hufacker Park, SF, through the 16th (JC, mob). A Black-and-white Warbler turned up at Garin RP, ALA, on Apr. 5 (HH). A Painted Redstart visited El Polin Springs in the Presidio, SF, on the 26th (EO). Migrating Yellow-breasted Chats were reported from SCL on the 28th at Metcalf and Coyote Ranch Rd. (RP, MM, MOB, BRe) and in Foothills Park in Palo Alto (MS). The Fremont, ALA, Clay-colored Sparrow finally left town on Apr. 17 (CWm; mob). Blue Grosbeaks returned to Patterson Pass Rd., ALA, on the 17th (BD, RC) and to Fd Levin CP, SCL, on the 20th (SR). The Fort Mason, SF, Orchard Oriole was last reported on the 3rd (JC). A Baltimore Oriole was observed in the SM Hills, Apr. 9-11 (CVR).

Special thanks to the following observers for their contributions to the 2008 Observations

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observers. Abbreviation "mob" = many observers; "oob" = out of bounds. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listservs; the author apologizes for any errors or omissions. Special thanks to Brent Plater and Sam McNally for assistance in compiling data.

Abbreviations for Observers: AH, Alan Hopkins; AK, Andy Kleinhesselink; AR, Andrew Rush; BB, Bob Brandt; BC, Bob Carr; BF, Brian Fitch; BP, Bob Power; BRe, Bob Reising; BR, Bob Richmond; BS, Bob Stewart; CDL, Calvin D. Lou; CVR, Craig V. R. Spence; CW, Christine Wolfe; CWm, Charles Woodrum; DF, Dea Freid; DL, Don Lewis; DM, Dominik Mosur; DR, Don Renberg; DW, Dea Wright; EO, Eric Osterhaus; GT, Glen Tepke; HH, Hugh Harvey; HT, Helen Kochenderfer; JA, Jerrie Arkin; JC, Josiah Clark; JD, Joe Devine; JF, Jeff Fairclough; JH, Jeff Hoppes; JM, Joseph Morlan; KH, Keith Hansen; KV, Karen Veras; KW, Kerry W. Cox; LA, Linda Adams; LB, Len Bumin; LC, Lee Carney; LG, Laurie Graham; LN, Len Nelson; LS, Loren Sutherland; MB, Matt Brady; MM, Michael Mammiser; MOB, Malorie O'Brien; MPa, Mark Rauzon; MP, Mike Rogers; MS, Marty S. S.; MSu, Michele Stevenson; MSu, Merv Sundove; PC, Peter C. Lasant; PD, Peggy Don; PM, Peter Metropoulos; RC, Rich Cimino; RG, Robert Garrison; RM, Roger Muskat; RP, Ryan Phillips; RT, Ron Thorn; SH, Steve Huckabone; SM, Stan Moore; SR, Steve Rottenberg; TC, Tom Cushman; TR, Ted Robertson; VT, V. V. Twar; W, William Legga.

Abbreviations for Counties and Others: ALA, Alameda; CC, Contra Costa; CP, County Park; Cr, Creek; Cyn, Canyon; EEC, Environmental Education Center; GGP, Golden Gate Park; L, Lake; MRN, Marin; Mt, Mount; N, North; NAP, Napa; NWR, National Wildlife Refuge; OSP, Open Space Preserve; PRNS, Pt. Reyes National Seashore; Pt, Point; Rd, Road; Res, Reservoir; RP, Regional Park; RS, Regional Shoreline; S, South; SB, State Beach; SCL, Santa Clara; SF, San Francisco; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; SP, State Park; SR, State Reserve.

Make Your 2009 Travel Plans with Golden Gate Audubon

Next year, Golden Gate Audubon is offering "Big Trips" to three destinations outside the Bay Area. For applications and detailed information about the trips below, please contact Ruth Tobey, 510.528.2093 or ruth Tobey@earthlink.net.

THE BIRDS OF BELIZE AND BRAZIL

Mark Pretti, an enthusiastic all-around naturalist with a gift for sharing his extensive knowledge of flora and fauna, will lead trips to Belize and Brazil.

Belize is known for its largely undisturbed tropical forests and tremendous diversity of wildlife. We will stay in four of the best nature lodges and visit a variety of habitats to see Belize's 570-plus species of birds and its other tropical wildlife. The first section of this trip has sold out, but the second, February 21–March 3, has openings for 10 participants. Cost is \$2,850 per person (based on double occupancy and including a \$150 tax-deductible donation to GGA) and is all-inclusive from Belize City. A \$300 deposit per person is required.

The Brazil trips center on Mato Grosso, the Pantanal, and the southern Amazon. Mark has lived in this area and has guided

dozens of nature enthusiasts. Staying at four of Brazil's best nature lodges, we'll explore some of the earth's richest habitats with almost 750 species of birds and more than 200 species of mammals. Dates are June 27–July 11 and July 11–25. Each trip is limited to eight participants. Cost is \$4,350 per person (based on double occupancy and including a \$150 tax-deductible donation to GGA) and is all-inclusive from Cuiaba, Mato Grosso (subject to modest adjustment if 2009 hotel/transport costs increase). A deposit of \$300 per person is required.

WINTER AND SPRING IN OREGON

Harry Fuller, a popular Golden Gate Audubon field trip leader who now lives in Ashland, Oregon, will lead two extended trips. If you do not know Harry, you can experience the flavor of his extensive knowledge of and enthusiasm for birds on his blog at <http://atowhee.wordpress.com/>.

The first trip, January 23–25, will begin at the Klamath Basin for Bald Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, Prairie Falcon, and wintering waterfowl. The second day will focus on the Rogue Valley, which should yield abundant waterfowl, Northern Pygmy-Owl,

and Short-eared Owl. Day three will take us to Emigrant Lake near Ashland to look for a variety of birds, among them both eagle species, Lewis's Woodpecker, Mountain Chickadee, Mountain Bluebird, and American Dipper. One evening, Harry will present a short, richly illustrated lecture on the history of birding in California and Oregon, or we may have speaker from the Klamath Bird Observatory.

The second trip will be on Memorial Day weekend, May 22–25, in the middle of high season for high-elevation birds. Among the many target species are Northern Goshawk, Gray Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Bluebird, White-headed Woodpecker, Townsend's Solitaire, Green-tailed Towhee, Hermit Warbler, Great Gray Owl, American Dipper, Common Poorwill, Vaux's Swift, and possibly Yellow Rail in the upper Klamath Basin. An extension on May 26 is available for seeking out Black Swift at Salt Creek Falls or Burney Falls.

Each Oregon trip is limited to 10 participants and requires a \$100 deposit. Cost has not yet been determined but will include lodging and ground transportation, as well as a \$50 tax-deductible donation to GGA.

Don't Forget to Renew Your Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Membership

It's not too late to become a 2008 Supporting Member of Golden Gate Audubon. Why should you be a Supporting Member of Golden Gate Audubon? Let us count the ways.

Your Supporting Member dues go directly to help Golden Gate Audubon protect Bay Area birds and other wildlife, restore native habitats, and connect thousands of Bay Area residents with our treasured wild places.

Your Supporting Member dues allow us to bring you *The Gull* 10 times a year and give you a 10 percent discount at our Nature Store and priority registration for select field trips.

Your Supporting Member dues enable us to recruit hundreds of volunteers to restore local wetlands and upland habitats, and introduce thousands of young students and their families in East Oakland and North Richmond to the wonders of the outdoor world.

Your Supporting Member dues allow us to lead dozens of free

field trips throughout the Bay Area and beyond, offer free monthly slide-show lectures with fascinating speakers, and enable us to speak up in defense of birds when their habitats are threatened through advocacy or, when necessary, litigation.

If you belong to the National Audubon Society (NAS), but are not a Supporting Member of Golden Gate Audubon, you enjoy a complimentary membership in Golden Gate Audubon. But the small amount of funding we receive from NAS does not even cover the cost of mailing you *The Gull*. And it does not sustain our critical conservation and education work in the Bay Area. All of our activities depend on the contributions of our Supporting Members.

To become a Supporting Member of Golden Gate Audubon or to renew your 2008 membership, just go to www.goldengateaudubon.org to make your contribution through our secure server. You can also join or renew by calling the office at 510.843.2222. Please join or renew today!

The Many Rewards of a Big Year

I am not much of a lister. I don't even know exactly how many bird species are on my life list. So why did I decide to do a 2008 Big Year in Contra Costa County?

Having recently quit my job in San Francisco, I longed to get back to the beautiful natural areas in the East Bay. Bob Power's idea to start an Alameda County Big Year got me thinking it would be fun to see just how many species I could find in one year in my home county. Located on the Pacific Flyway, Contra Costa County boasts various regions with diverse climates and birding habitats. Spanning from the San Francisco Bay to the San Joaquin Delta at the western edge of the Central Valley, Contra Costa also includes magnificent Mount Diablo and the East Bay hills, where I played as a child.

Before I committed to the idea of a Big Year, I checked the Contra Costa County page on Joe Morlan's website and found that Steve Glover held the record for the most birds seen in one year in the county, set back in 1998. I wondered, could I get to his total of 255? Having birded for 24 years, I knew which species I would most likely see, then guessed how many of the less likely species I might encounter. I made a personal goal of 225. I was going to keep the count mostly to myself, sharing it with only few birding friends, but Bob Lewis suggested that I follow Bob Power's lead and make the quest a friendly competition by inviting others to join and post their monthly results on a web page that Bob Lewis would set up just for us. Sharing sightings would be a great way to add new species I might otherwise miss.

I spent 28 days in January birding, most within Contra Costa County. I revisited favorite regional parks, such as Round Valley, and explored new trails, including Kennedy Grove's Sea Foam Trail. My birding experiences were diverse. On January 15 at Black Diamond Mines, I sat alone on a cold rocky ledge, surrounded by manzanita, for an hour and a half listening for a call note of the Canyon Wren. My patience was rewarded when I heard the bird calling on the rock just behind me. Two days later, just before sunset, Nick Despota and Nel Benningshof, also participating in the Contra Costa Big Year, invited me to see a White-throated Sparrow that had been

visiting their feeder. I watched the bird from a warm, comfortable chair through the living room window while sipping a glass of Sauvignon Blanc—a decadent way to increase one's Big Year tally!

On April 20 I joined Steve Glover in a Big Contra Costa County Day. We began birding at 4:45 a.m. in Elden Regional Park. Next we birded the Richmond shoreline, stopped at McNelly's Marsh in Martinez, visited Mitchell Canyon and along Marsh Creek Road, dashed around East Contra Costa, and ended at 8:40 p.m. out by the Byron Airport. I concluded the day with 166 species, three less

than Steve. The best bird of the day was Solitary Sandpiper, a species I had not seen in Contra Costa in 11 years.

So what have I have gained so far from doing a Big Year? Being out birding almost daily has heightened my awareness of seasonal changes and how they affect birds. I'm adding subtle vocalizations to the bird sounds I already know. I am birding slower and seeing more bird behavior—the most interesting being allopreening adult Wrentits. I have learned that birding in the middle of the day can sometimes be really, really productive. I have been saddened to see favorite birding hot spots succumbing to development. But each day I'm in the field, my interest in learning more about birds and everything associated with them is refreshed. I'm currently at 215 birds. The next 10 are going to be tough!

—Denise Wight



Lazuli Bunting in Wildcat Canyon Regional Park, one of the many areas covered by Contra Costa Big Year birders.

Bob Lewis

In addition to being a passionate birder, Denise Wight is an experienced and skilled instructor who has taught many classes for Golden Gate Audubon. One of her specialties is birding by ear. Her next class, Summer Birding, begins in June 24—and six of the seven sessions are trips into the field to observe local species and learn about their habits and habitats (see complete class listings on page 5). To follow Denise's birding activities, go to her website, www.blkittiwake.com.

Bob Power's story of starting the Alameda County Big Year is in the May 2008 Gull. You can check up on how the Contra Costa and Alameda County Big Year birders are doing on Bob Lewis's website, www.wingbeats.org.

are sometimes distant from their breeding grounds. Typically, plovers prefer to rest in small depressions on sandy beaches near dunes. When feeding, they forage along the shoreline as they skirt the waves. Failure of the plovers to feed and rest adequately outside the breeding season impairs their breeding, as is true for many shorebird species that winter on San Francisco beaches.

The National Park Service currently has emergency rules for the protection of Western Snowy Plovers on San Francisco beaches. Each year, from July until May, certain activities that disturb foraging and resting plovers are restricted in the Wildlife Protection Area (WPA) at Crissy Field, which is the beach near the western end of Crissy Field, and the Snowy Plover Protection Area (SPPA) at Ocean Beach, which goes from Stairwell 17 to Sloat Avenue. During the wintering season in the WPA and SPPA, it is illegal to engage in any activities that can harass the plovers. Although these beaches remain open, visitors are not permitted to disturb or flush the plovers by jogging through areas where plovers are resting or foraging, flying kites nearby, skim-boarding along the shoreline, or allowing dogs to run off leash. Visitors are encouraged to share the shoreline but not to disturb the wildlife.

Golden Gate Audubon members have joined the National Park Service docent program to educate the public about the Western Snowy Plover. This outreach program equipped volunteers with the knowledge and materials to inform park visitors about the threatened plovers, the regulations that protect the species, and how the public can avoid impacts to the birds. With a constant flow of new visitors unfamiliar with the GGNRA's natural resources, it is important to have ongoing programs that reach people who might be unaware of

how some activities can harm Snowy Plovers and other wildlife.

For three years, Golden Gate Audubon members have also been monitoring the Western Snowy Plover population at Crissy Field. Matt Zlatunich, a member of our San Francisco Conservation Committee, has been monitoring at Crissy Field with a team of volunteers. The ongoing effort contributes to our understanding of the impacts of human activities on the plovers.

In addition, from 2005 to 2007, Golden Gate Audubon participated in the Negotiated Rulemaking process that seeks to develop regulations in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area regarding use by visitors walking dogs. A proposed rule has recently been released that would apply to all of the GGNRA. Golden Gate Audubon is currently reviewing the proposal and will continue to advocate for strong protection of Western Snowy Plover habitat while supporting a balance of all park activities.

—Eli Saddler, Conservation Director

HOW YOU CAN HELP

This year, to celebrate the return of the Western Snowy Plovers, Golden Gate Audubon is partnering with the National Park Service, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, the San Francisco Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation, and other groups for a beach cleanup and outreach day at Ocean Beach on Saturday, July 26. Please join us at Stairwell 17 from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. to improve plover habitat and engage the public in protecting the species.

To learn about how you can help the threatened Western Snowy Plover, please contact Eli Saddler, esaddler@goldengateaudubon.org.

GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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